

A's News Clips, Friday, July 30, 2010

Oakland A's can't keep up with powerful Texas Rangers

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

ARLINGTON, Texas — The marquee names did their damage Thursday night for the Texas Rangers, as Michael Young and Josh Hamilton combined for seven hits.

Then again, it was home runs from David Murphy and Taylor Teagarden further down in the batting order that sent A's starter Vin Mazzaro to the showers.

Texas proved during a 7-4 victory over Oakland that any part of its lineup can punish a pitcher. Right now that's the most glaring difference between the American League West-leading Rangers and the A's, who dropped two of three here and fell 8½ games back in the division.

The A's have 61 games left, including 10 against Texas, but their challenge in catching the AL West leaders appears as big as the Lone Star State itself.

"We have a lot of baseball left," A's manager Bob Geren said. "We've just got to shake tonight off and get ready for Chicago."

The A's begin a three-game series tonight against the White Sox, and it's unlikely they'll have closer Andrew Bailey. An MRI revealed Bailey has a strained intercostal (rib cage) muscle on his right side.

The A's haven't decided whether to place the two-time All-Star on the 15-day disabled list.

Bailey has missed the past seven games, and when he originally got hurt while delivering a pitch July 20 against the Boston Red Sox, his injury was listed as back spasms. Since then, Bailey said he's developed soreness in his side.

He threw a bullpen session Wednesday but continues having discomfort when he throws.

"I don't know how it happened, but I've been having pain there for a few days now," he said. " ... I was having trouble when I released the ball. It felt like it didn't want to go to that next notch, so to speak."

Intercostal injuries haven't boded well for the A's in 2010.

Travis Buck was sidelined a lengthy period with the injury, and fellow outfielder Coco Crisp missed 28 games with it, though his trouble spot was in the chest area.

At least the A's got off to a nice start Thursday against Texas left-hander C.J. Wilson.

Rajai Davis doubled in the first, stole third and scored on Kurt Suzuki's sacrifice fly.

Mazzaro (6-3) gave two runs back in the bottom of the first. Young, who went 4 for 4 with three runs, singled, and Hamilton doubled. Both came around to score.

The A's trailed 4-1 in the top of the sixth but rallied for two runs, including Cliff Pennington's RBI double.

But Mazzaro couldn't keep it a one-run game in the bottom half of the inning. Murphy turned on a slider and launched a 431-foot homer to right. Then Teagarden, who was 1 for 27 in his previous 10 starts at catcher this season, took a fastball the opposite way for a two-run homer to bump Texas' lead to 7-3.

"I didn't have my best stuff," said Mazzaro, who saw his four-game win streak snapped. "The guys battled back and got runs. I just couldn't put up zeros."

The loss snapped the A's string of four straight series wins.

Texas, going for its first division title since 1999, acquired infielder Jorge Cantu from the Florida Marlins for two minor league pitchers Thursday.

There's no indication that the A's will be active as Saturday's nonwaiver trade deadline approaches, though the Red Sox — seeking bullpen help — reportedly have shown interest in Craig Breslow and Michael Wuertz.

Oakland A's update: Injured pitcher Ben Sheets realizes elbow surgery offers no guarantees

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

ARLINGTON, Texas — Right-hander Ben Sheets knows that surgery offers the only possible route to continuing his major league career.

But he acknowledged that even a second operation on his right elbow doesn't necessarily guarantee a return to the mound.

Sheets, 32, held a conference call with reporters Thursday from his home in Louisiana, one day after the A's announced he had torn the flexor tendon in his elbow for the second time and will miss the rest of the season.

Sheets said doctors found that the tear in his elbow is "a lot worse" than the first one, leading him to believe a more extensive procedure would have to be done this time.

He's leaning heavily toward having the surgery, adding he'd prefer to schedule it soon.

"My arm just didn't hold up at the end of the day," Sheets said before the A's-Texas Rangers game. "I'm obviously getting toward the back end of my career. "... I think if I come back I'd have to feel a lot better than I did."

A four-time All-Star, Sheets missed the entire 2009 season after having elbow surgery in February of that year. When the A's signed him to a one-year, \$10 million deal this past January, he and the team expressed confidence his elbow was completely recovered.

Sheets said another surgery almost certainly would sideline him for the entire 2011 season.

"Rule out the back end of next year. That's pushing it if I want to heal and not end up here again," he said. "Looking back, your arm tells you everything you need to know. And my arm was telling me the whole time I just wasn't right."

Sheets plans to rejoin the A's in Oakland next week.

With first baseman Daric Barton getting a night off, Rajai Davis hit second behind Coco Crisp in the A's 7-4 loss to Texas.

Davis went 2-for-5, stole two bases and scored the A's first run.

A's manager Bob Geren talked about a Crisp-Davis combo atop the batting order during spring training. But Crisp has missed significant time with injuries and Geren has been happy with Barton in the No. 2 spot.

Geren said Brett Anderson won't have any restrictions tonight when he comes off the disabled list to start the series opener against the Chicago White Sox. Anderson has missed eight weeks with left elbow inflammation.

Chin Music: Andrew Bailey seeing doctors for his back; Ben Sheets discusses his future

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 7/29/2010 3:46pm

There's lots of pregame stuff to report as the Texas sun beats down during batting practice, so we'll cut to the chase:

—The condition of Andrew Bailey's back is a growing concern for the A's. The closer threw again today and still felt pain, so he's going to be examined by the Rangers' team doctors. That means he's definitely unavailable tonight, and you have to think the DL is a possibility given how long this has lingered. Just yesterday, manager Bob Geren looked at me like I was crazy when I asked if the DL was being considered. He was quite optimistic yesterday that Bailey was turning the corner, but obviously Bailey isn't progressing as everyone hoped. And Geren was awaiting word on whether Michael Wuertz and Craig Breslow — who have each thrown the past two days — would be available tonight. Tune in for the ninth inning. I'm just as curious as you to see who the A's closer might be.

–Ben Sheets addressed reporters on a conference call today. He hasn't made up his mind completely to have elbow surgery but is strongly leaning toward it. Regardless, he's out for the season, and having surgery to repair his torn flexor tendon would likely sideline him for the entire 2011 season as well, he believes. Sheets said he was surprised to hear he tore the tendon again because his pain wasn't as bad as last time and it was in a different area. But he said this tear is even worse than last time, and he thinks a different type of procedure would need to be done. Given he's been through this rehab process once already without success, you have to wonder if Sheets will consider retirement. But he thinks surgery will be necessary just to have normal function in his arm for his non-baseball life as well.

"I'm 32, and I'm obviously getting toward the back end of my career," he said. "We'll see if my arm rebounds. I think if I come back I'd have to feel a lot better than I did."

Sheets is just a solid dude, and you wish the best for him whether he pitches again or not. He plans to fly to Oakland next week and rejoin the A's during their next homestand. His nuttiness will be welcomed by his teammates. ...

*****BREAKING NEWS: The Rangers just announced that they've acquired Jorge Cantu from Florida for two minor league pitchers. It's my understanding Cantu will play first base and occasionally some third.

–A couple of former Athletics are caught up in today's other trade activity, with reports saying Miguel Tejada will go from Baltimore to San Diego and Brett Wallace will be dealt from Toronto to Houston. Wallace's head must be spinning. This would make three trades in the past year for the highly touted corner infield prospect. The A's acquired him last July from St. Louis as part of the Matt Holliday trade, then dealt him to Toronto in December for outfielder Michael Taylor.

Finally, here's tonight's lineups, with Daric Barton and Jack Cust getting the night off against lefty C.J. Wilson.

A's: Crisp CF, Davis LF, Suzuki DH, Kouzmanoff 3B, Rosales 1B, Ellis 2B, Powell C, Carson RF, Pennington SS; Mazzaro RHP.

Rangers: Andrus SS, Young 3B, Hamilton CF, Guerrero DH, Cruz RF, Murphy LF, Arias 2B, Moreland 1B, Teagarden C; Wilson LHP.

Hicks: 'Moneyball' film crew brings missing buzz back to Oakland Coliseum

By Tony Hicks, Contra Costa Times 7/29/2010

Five hours of waiting, being herded like cattle, and occasionally cheering at a fake baseball game was getting old.

Scores of "Moneyball" extras at the Oakland Coliseum were chilled, fatigued and skeptical about the promise of Hollywood glamour, not to mention irritated about Chex Mix qualifying as "snacks."

Then he appeared.

At first he resembled another film production guy, walking from the third-base dugout Tuesday toward a group trying to set up a shot of a game that took place eight years ago. The man in the gray pullover, beige pants and wool hat turned to the crowd, displaying the profile that has launched a million tabloids. A woman screamed. Idle chatter vanished.

Someone dropped a cup of Chex Mix.

The Talent had arrived.

While Brad Pitt nonchalantly strolled toward the production crew about 9:30 p.m., the cameras people were forbidden to bring emerged. A couple of hurried, official-looking men moved through the stands, firmly reminding the seated extras that pictures were a no-no.

Then Pitt waved ... and smiled. And the rules went out the window.

Pitt and crew are at the Oakland Coliseum this week, filming scenes for the film adaptation of "Moneyball," the 2004 best-seller about A's honcho Billy Beane and his groundbreaking approach to building a contender.

Tuesday's filming was the re-enactment of a pivotal 2002 game against the Kansas City Royals. The one in which the A's blew an 11-0 lead but eventually won on Scott Hatteberg's home run, giving the team its American League record-breaking 20th straight victory.

Tuesday's filming involved parts of two scenes that might represent 60 seconds of screen time, but which took longer to film than it would take to play a doubleheader.

If it seemed like a big deal for Oakland and its beleaguered baseball franchise, that's because it was. Even with the waiting, the chill and the tedium, Oakland loves being worthy of a major Hollywood production — a second shift of green-and-gold-dipped A's fans lined up outside for the 11 p.m.-5 a.m. shift. Especially because the A's haven't had much success since the "Moneyball" years of the early 2000s.

This week is a chance to restore buzz to what's become a faceless franchise — except, of course, for Beane, who's played by one of the most famous faces on the planet. If you squinted, you could almost believe the actor-athletes playing former stars Miguel Tejada, Jermaine Dye and Tim Hudson were the real deal. "Chad Bradford" even had his knuckle-scraping sidearm delivery down pat.

The evening began with a microphone-toting director-type instructing a few sections of fans on the third-base side to react as if shortstop Tejada made an error near second base. Extras were told to be "devastated," which isn't much of a stretch for A's fans. Fans groaned and grumbled through a dozen takes, as the poor guy playing Tejada dropped ball after ball. Then everyone was told to get up and migrate to the right-field stands, while "Tejada" made the error another few dozen times.

The idea was to film a section full of A's fans, who would later be digitally replicated to fill the stadium. The amount of coordination that goes into just one shot is immense, even if the movie production at times resembled the old Caltrans joke — a few guys working, a bunch of other guys watching.

A day's work would result in just a few seconds of celluloid time for the extras. The upside was perhaps catching a glimpse of one's own face on the big screen, as well boasting about being in a movie with Pitt, Robin Wright, Jonah Hill and Philip Seymour-Hoffman, who plays former A's manager Art Howe. He filmed a scene in which Hudson is replaced during the same Kansas City game. "Hudson" would pitch to a Royals batter, a pitching machine would launch a base hit into center field, and "Howe" would make the slow walk to the mound to bring in "Bradford" ... about 20 times.

It was during a long break that Pitt emerged. Suddenly everyone — especially women, funny enough — weren't complaining about the lack of food. After 15 minutes, Pitt/Beane began walking with someone else toward the open center-field gate, beyond which — outside the stadium — sat dozens of trailers bearing satellite dishes. He waved again, walked a few more feet, then stopped and took a long stride toward the crowd, throwing an imaginary ball into the stands.

The crowd roared — just like in 2002. It was good to hear again.

Ailing A's fall to Rangers 7-3

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

This was more akin to a normal game at Texas, and the increasingly injury-depleted A's wound up on the wrong side of it.

After splitting two low-scoring games against the Rangers and their All-Star laden lineup, Oakland was upended 7-4 by the division leaders to lose the series and drop to 8 1/2 games back in the AL West. A's starter Vin Mazzaro, who had won his previous four decisions, gave up a season-high 12 hits and seven runs in 5 1/3 innings.

After the A's cut the deficit to one in the sixth, Mazzaro gave up two homers - both on two-strike pitches - and three runs in the bottom of the inning. "I really got ahead of some guys, but I couldn't put them away," Mazzaro said.

Poor health news continues to dominate the A's season, though it hasn't shown signs of derailing it. On Wednesday, it was closer Andrew Bailey, still not available after missing more than a week with back spasms. He was seen by Rangers orthopedist Dr. Keith Meister, and an MRI exam showed a strained right ribcage muscle.

Bailey said his side has been "just achy" when releasing the ball the past several days, and there's no real timetable for the injury - Meister told him he could wake up feeling fine. Nevertheless, Bailey is likely to land on the disabled list today - he's already been out nine days, and the team is sure to take a cautious approach with the two-time All-Star after two injuries in less than two weeks. Plus the A's need to make a move to take tonight's starter, Brett Anderson, off the DL.

The day before, the team announced that \$10 million starter Ben Sheets will miss the rest of the season with a torn flexor tendon in his elbow. Sheets said on a conference call Thursday that he plans to have surgery, his second time for the same procedure, but he isn't sure about pitching again. He wants to have the tendon repaired so he can have the option to get back on the mound and also so he can do everyday activities.

"If I came back, it would have to feel a lot better," he said.

Sheets said he was shocked to learn the tendon was torn again. In 2008, he said, he was in such pain he couldn't open doors or brush his teeth. This time, the elbow was extremely swollen, but not unbearably painful. Should he opt to pitch again, it's unlikely he'd be able to do so until 2012; aiming for the end of next season would be unrealistic, he suggested.

Sheets will be a free agent, and he said, "I'm 32, I'm toward the back end of my career. We'll see."

Sheets returned home to Louisiana on Wednesday but said he'll return to Oakland next week.

A's Ben Sheets to miss rest of year

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Ben Sheets was worried that his swollen right elbow was an indication he'd require flexor-tendon surgery if he is to pitch again, and he had that confirmed Wednesday after visiting with orthopedist Dr. **Keith Meister** the previous evening.

"He's out for the year," manager **Bob Geren** said. "He'll be missed on the field and off; a lot of our young guys looked up to him for his competitiveness."

A torn flexor tendon ended Sheets' season with the Brewers in 2008, and he missed last season after surgery. It isn't known yet if Sheets will opt for surgery; he is 32, and he already has been through the lengthy rehab and free-agent job search once.

Sheets, who signed a one-year, \$10 million deal with the A's in January, was unavailable to speak with reporters because he returned to his home in Louisiana.

Jason Jennings, signed to a minor-league deal by the A's this spring, did come back to start a few games for Texas after his second flexor-tendon surgery, then pitched in relief in 2009. He has yet to work in a game this year and is rehabbing at home.

Choice signs: Top draft pick **Michael Choice**, an outfielder from Texas-Arlington taken 10th overall last month, has signed with the A's for a \$2 million bonus, according to agent **Jeff Frye**, confirming Baseball America's report earlier in the day.

The A's did not make an announcement. Choice, who attended Timberview High in Arlington, might be brought to Rangers Ballpark today for an official introduction.

Briefly: **Jack Cust** said Tuesday's ejection was his first in the big leagues, but he had had enough of what he felt was an excessively big strike zone for Rangers starter **Cliff Lee**. "He doesn't need that much help," Cust said. "It was just automatically 0-1 no matter where he threw it." ... **Andrew Bailey** (back spasm) threw a bullpen session and is likely to be available today. ... **Rajai Davis** recorded his second 30-steal season, becoming the fifth Oakland player to do so.

Fans enjoying Coliseum 'Moneyball' shoot

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

While the A's were battling with the Rangers and with the heat in Texas, fans at the Coliseum were enjoying Scott Hatteberg's homer to extend Oakland's winning streak to a record 20 games.

In 2002.

The "Moneyball" movie began filming the Hatteberg sequence on Wednesday night, according to A's batboy Jordan Iseron, who is playing a batboy in the movie.

"It was a blast," Iseron said by phone on Thursday. "Almost as good as the real thing."

But actor Chris Pratt, playing Hatteberg, didn't exactly have the same result in his at-bat that Hatteberg did when his pinch-hit homer beat the Royals 12-11 in the bottom of the ninth on Sept. 4, 2002. The A's blew an 11-0 lead but managed to set the record for the longest American League winning streak, which still stands.

'They said, 'No matter what, if it's in fair territory, act like it's a home run,' " Iseron reported.

"His first swing was a weak broken-bat groundball and everyone rushed out there like it went into the fifth row."

Pratt, who stars in the NBC sitcom "Parks and Recreation," looks a lot like Hatteberg, however, "and he's got his mannerisms down," Iseron said. "You have to do a double-take to make sure it's not Scott."

Wednesday night also marked the first appearance of actors Brad Pitt (playing Billy Beane) and Jonah Hill (as Paul DePodesta) during the on-field portion of the filming, and Iseron said that both wowed the crowd of extras filling the stands, and Hill grabbed a microphone and told a few jokes.

Iseron, like most A's employees working during the production, is at the Coliseum from 3:30 p.m. to 5 a.m., and he's enjoying seeing the process.

"They filmed for 12 hours the first night and said they got 2 1/2 minutes of footage that they *might* use," Iseron said. "But everyone's having a great time and the fans have been super excited, really enthusiastic."

Former Giant Royce Clayton is playing Miguel Tejada, and onetime Oakland pitcher Jason Windsor is playing John Mabry, Iseron said. He said the former minor-leaguers playing Barry Zito and Tim Hudson look especially like the real thing.

"It's funny to see the Coliseum without all the tarps again, and with the old ads on the walls," Iseron said. "It's movie time in Oakland."

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Leaning left: The A's head to Chicago to face the White Sox, who lost two of three in Oakland last week. It's all left-handers for Oakland, including two, Brett Anderson and Gio Gonzalez, who didn't pitch in last week's set.

Drumbeat: Sheets to have surgery; Bailey has ribcage strain - updated

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Arlington, Texas 7/29/2010 3:27PM

UPDATE: Andrew Bailey's got a new injury - an intercostal (ribcage) strain, and he said he's not sure what the recovery time; Rangers team doctor Keith Meister told Bailey he might way up feeling fine, and Bailey said he's "just achy" when he releases the ball.

Still, after missing nine days already and now a second injury (the back spasms are gone), it's almost a sure thing he'll go on the DL tomorrow. Brett Anderson has to come off the DL, Bailey can be backdated to July 21, and the A's presumably don't want to take chances with their star young closer.

ORIGINAL POST

The most pressing news here is that closer Andrew Bailey is seeing the Rangers' team doctors about his back spasms; he did throw long toss today after a bullpen session yesterday, but manager Bob Geren said Bailey remains unavailable, so he's getting checked out. It's nearing that time when the A's can't backdate him much more on the DL so they'd have to make a decision basically in the next day or two for the maximum backdate. I'll update you if we hear more.

Ben Sheets said that he plans to go ahead and have flexor-tendon surgery, largely so he can have the option to pitch again if he decides he wants to, but also so he can do everyday activities; he pointed out that the flexor tendon stabilizes the elbow, so it's pretty important.

As for pitching again, Sheets said, "If I came back, I would have to feel a lot better."

He'd want to feel better, he'd want to know he is capable of better results, all of that - so he'll probably rehab, see how that goes, play it from there. He pointed out that he's 32 and on the back end of his career; by the time he'd be ready to pitch again, he'd be nearing 34. He says he'd likely miss all of next season; pitching toward the end of the season would be a push, plus, he said, he wants to make absolutely sure his elbow is fine after this experience. And of course it would be more difficult to line up a job in, say, August.

Sheets was shocked to learn his flexor-tendon was torn, he said. The first time, he was in so much pain, he couldn't open doors or brush his hair or his teeth. This time, he had some soreness and a lot of excessive swelling. He went into the trainer's room after starting against Boston thinking they'd say he had a little forearm strain, but instead they told him, "Oh, Ben, this doesn't look good." "My heart started palpitating," Sheets said.

He's not certain when the tendon tore again, but the elbow has been swollen for a few weeks. He didn't believe it was on any one pitch, but happened over time.

"I'm sure (the surgery) was done correctly and the rehab, it just didn't hold up on me," Sheets said.

Sheets isn't sure if Dr. James Andrews will do the surgery again, or if he'll go to Rangers orthopedist Dr. Keith Meister, who helped during Sheets' rehab.

He'll be back in Oakland on Monday or Tuesday he said, which is good news for a club that looks to Sheets as a leader. The young pitching staff in particular can still learn a lot from Sheets, and as catcher Kurt Suzuki said last night, "It sounds corny, but Ben just brightens your day. He's always got something funny to say."

Oops, almost forgot the lineup: Crisp cf, Davis lf, Suzuki dh, Kouzmanoff 3b, Rosales 1b, Ellis 2b, Powell c, Carson rf, Pennington ss

It's righty heavy vs. C.J. Wilson, but Daric Barton and Jack Cust are both available off the bench later in the game. And it's unclear who'd close the game, with Michael Wuertz and Craig Breslow working two nights in a row and three games in a row.

Mazzaro struggles as A's exit Texas defeated

Struggling lineup sends Oakland to just fourth loss in 14 games

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- Vin Mazzaro's sudden rise as a dependable every-fifth-day starter has been undeniable.

So the A's, looking to notch a series victory over the Rangers and move fewer than seven games back in the American League West on Thursday, felt rather confident in sending their young right-hander out to the mound for the rubber match.

But on a night when Oakland needed Mazzaro to dazzle the most, he struggled mightily. As a result, the A's eventually found themselves on the losing end of a 7-4 contest at the Ballpark in Arlington and 8 1/2 games back in the division.

Mazzaro endured his worst start of the year, surrendering a career-high-tying seven runs and 12 hits in the loss as he dropped to 6-3 on the season, a campaign that -- up until Thursday -- had treated him quite nicely, as evidenced by his recent string of four straight wins that brought a 2.12 ERA.

"He's been throwing the ball so well for us," said manager Bob Geren. "He'll bounce back after this. We've talked about it before, but these conditions, this lineup, always make it a little more tougher."

At the top of the lineup, Michael Young and Josh Hamilton combined for a 7-for-8 night and Vladimir Guerrero was responsible for three runs. The bottom half of the order wasn't too shabby, either. In fact, it proved to be rather hurtful in the form of monster homers from David Murphy and Taylor Teagarden in the sixth frame, the latter a two-run blast that not only ended Mazzaro's night, but Oakland's as well.

Before Teagarden's first jack of the season, the A's were down by just two runs. But another 2-2 pitch down the middle -- Mazzaro offered the same to Murphy -- changed it all.

"I really got ahead of some guys," the A's hurler said, "and I just couldn't put them away."

"These past couple tied games, they've been good baseball," Geren said. "Tonight, it was the sixth inning they got away. It was just a struggle. Those two homers put us out of range."

But Mazzaro was in trouble from the start, as he gave up two quick runs in the first before watching the pesky Rangers tack on another run in both the third and fifth frames.

"I didn't think we tried to do too much against Mazzaro," said Rangers manager Ron Washington. "We made him throw the ball over the plate, we swung at the pitches we wanted to swing at and everything worked out good."

The A's couldn't stage a large enough comeback in the ninth, when Coco Crisp hit a single with one out and eventually scored on a poke from Rajai Davis. Davis, though, ultimately got caught in a double play started by Kurt Suzuki that ended the frame and subsequently the game.

"We made an effort at the end," Geren said, "but it didn't happen. There's a lot of baseball left, obviously, with over 60 games to go. We just have to shake this one off."

Shaking a loss is one thing. Shaking a loss that leaves you at a good distance away from first place is another. But the A's aren't worried yet -- at least they didn't say so. The Rangers, meanwhile, are feeling a sense of comfort in their first-place seat.

"The key was to try and win each series we played, and we did," Washington said. "The guys have a knack of bouncing back. They don't get down. They came out tonight and did what they had to do: get out ahead and stay ahead. That's exactly what we did."

Texas got 5 2/3 innings from starter C.J. Wilson, who allowed three runs on seven hits with two walks and five strikeouts, improving to 10-5 on the year. He allowed a sacrifice fly to Suzuki in the first, but the A's didn't add on again until the sixth frame, when Kevin Kouzmanoff doubled and scored on a force-out from Landon Powell, who eventually crossed home plate on a Cliff Pennington double.

None of it could prevent a loss, just the club's fourth in its past 14 games. For Mazzaro, the seven runs matched the combined total of runs he allowed in each of his previous four starts.

"Some pitches he tried to get in, he left over the middle," Geren said. "His slider wasn't as devastating as we've seen, and his better ones were over the outside. Their big guys hurt us, and the ones down in the lineup just added on. Vin was getting ahead, but he just wasn't finishing them off."

Bailey likely to hit disabled list with rib strain

A's closer visits with doctors during Thursday's loss to Rangers

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- Andrew Bailey's return to the mound appeared to be coming sooner rather than later, but the A's closer delivered a dose of unexpected news Thursday night by revealing that he has a right intercostal (rib) muscle strain.

The right-handed reliever, healthy all season up to this point, has been sidelined since July 20 when he experienced back spasms during two innings of work against Boston. Somewhere between then and now, though, the back pains turned into rib pains.

"Once the back spasms kind of relaxed and got pushed aside," Bailey said, "my ribs started hurting."

Such is life in the A's clubhouse, where the disabled list has already been used 19 times. Bailey could very well be the 20th as soon as Friday, when Oakland will be looking to free up a roster spot for Brett Anderson, who is scheduled to be activated and start against Chicago.

Kurt Suzuki missed two weeks with the same intercostal injury earlier in the season, as did Coco Crisp, who stayed on the DL for almost a month.

"It's the year of the intercostal injury," Bailey said. "There always seems to be a common injury every year, and I guess I got bit by it. It's unfortunate."

Bailey was diagnosed by Dr. Keith Meister, the Rangers' team physician, during Oakland's 7-4 loss to Texas on Thursday. Just 24 hours earlier, Meister told right-hander Ben Sheets he has a season-ending torn flexor tendon in his elbow.

Thus, news didn't come in the best form for the A's on their three-game road set in Texas -- which also resulted in a series loss -- but Bailey is hoping his setback isn't very serious.

"[Meister] said it's one of those things where I could wake up and feel great," Bailey said, "or it can be a yo-yo thing if I push it."

Bailey, who joined Trevor Cahill at the All-Star Game earlier this month, has not allowed a run in 13 of his past 15 appearances, a time span in which he's compiled a 1.10 ERA. He has a 1.56 mark on the season, good for fifth among all American League relievers.

Worth noting

The official announcement of first-round Draft pick Michael Choice's \$2 million signing with the A's, as confirmed Wednesday pending a physical by Choice's agent, was expected Thursday. However, an A's representative said it likely won't come until Friday at the earliest. ... Landon Powell received his first start at catcher since July 18, while Kurt Suzuki was placed in the designated hitter's spot Thursday against the Rangers. Daric Barton received a day off, with Adam Rosales getting the start at first base to provide the A's a heavy right-handed-hitting lineup against Texas lefty C.J. Wilson. ... Geren said Conor Jackson (right hamstring) is progressing well in Arizona and had "the best day he's felt" Wednesday. However, there is still no timetable for his Minor League rehab assignment. ... Rajai Davis, who stole his 32nd base of the season against the Rangers on Thursday, is just the fifth player in Oakland history with at least two.

TWIB to showcase young A's hurlers

Program to give behind-the-scenes look at Cahill, Gonzalez

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

Despite their pedestrian offense, the A's have been able to stay in the American League West race this season. The chief reason: their young and talented pitching.

With an average age of 26.5 years, Oakland's staff is the youngest in the league and its 3.72 ERA is second only to the Rays. The staff will also be spotlighted on FOX's This Week in Baseball on Saturday at 3 p.m. ET/noon PT, from the burgeoning rotation all the way down the line to closer Andrew Bailey.

"TWIB" will start things off with a behind-the-scenes look at Oakland's young starters, namely 22-year-old All-Star Trevor Cahill and promising 24-year-old southpaw Gio Gonzalez. TWIB also talks with A's pitching coach Curt Young, who gives TWIB the inside scoop on how Oakland has been able to develop its crop of young arms.

"There's a developing group of guys," TWIB lead producer Matt Anderton said. "They've all come up together, they're all learning the game together and they're having success as a unit."

After that, TWIB and the A's will reflect on Dallas Braden's perfect game, about 12 weeks after the magical afternoon at the Oakland Coliseum on Mother's Day.

From there, TWIB will jump to the bullpen and focus on lefty reliever Craig Breslow, widely considered to be one baseball's smartest men. Given his Yale education, it's easy to see why. Breslow caught up with TWIB and his old college coach on Yale's campus and reflected on his educational and playing career with the Ivy League institution.

"We asked him how it was going from Yale's dugout to the Major League dugout," Anderton said. "And it's funny, he said as long as he sounds like he knows what he's talking about, everyone believes it."

TWIB also followed Breslow to a local hospital, where funds raised by his Strike 3 Foundation helped develop a new oncology unit.

In the next segment, TWIB will take a league-wide perspective and highlight MLB's Pepsi Refresh Project, focusing on an idea supported by Michael Cuddyer. The Twins utility man helps out with a roller baseball league, or baseball for those in wheelchairs.

TWIB will then bring its focus back to the A's and Bailey. Given Oakland's history of great closers, i.e. Rollie Fingers and Dennis Eckersley, TWIB asks the question: is Bailey next?

"We don't answer the question, but we kind of pose it," Anderton said.

Bailey is certainly off to the right start in his career, having won the AL Rookie of the Year Award last season and earned back-to-back All-Star nods.

TWIB will wrap up the show with great plays, bloopers and a Diamond Demo from MLB Network's Dan Plesac, who shows the art of a left-handed pickoff move. The XM "Call of the Week" will highlight Matt Garza's no-hitter, the fifth one thrown in baseball this year.

TWIB can be seen on video boards in stadiums, as well as internationally in Australia, Canada, Cuba, The Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Japan, Latin America, The Middle East, The Netherlands, Antilles, Nicaragua, Panama and Taiwan.

Fans can e-mail the show at twib@mlb.com, and visit the web site, MLBProductions.com, for original blogs and bonus footage. TWIB will re-air on MLB Network at 12:30 p.m. ET/9:30 a.m. PT on Sunday.

30-steal seasons. He has also hit safely in 18 of his past 19 games against the Rangers.

Sheets weighing decision of another surgery

Second elbow procedure, retirement the options for A's hurler

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- Ben Sheets heard the news once before, but listening to it a second time around proved to be no easier for the veteran hurler.

The A's 32-year-old right-hander, who learned he will miss the remainder of the season Wednesday with a torn flexor tendon in his already surgically-repaired right elbow, admitted Thursday he was rather surprised by the findings.

"When they diagnosed me, I was actually really shocked, to tell you the truth," said Sheets, speaking to reporters via phone for the first time since the news was announced. "I didn't have the same type of pain that I had two years ago. I just didn't quite feel it in the same area, and I thought it was to a lesser degree. I thought maybe it might be just a small strain in the forearm or something. I really didn't feel it on any pitch or anything, so I don't know if it was just over time, or what happened with it."

Sheets will be a free agent at the end of the year, so he could potentially choose to elect retirement rather than face another procedure and the process of finding a team. But his innate competitiveness and genuine love for the game has the four-time All-Star strongly considering another surgery.

"I'm just trying to step back from it," he said. "At the end of the day, I'll probably have the surgery sooner than later, for the sheer fact that it gives you opportunities and options later on no matter what you decide. The way it looks this time, for everyday life, it's a good idea."

Renowned orthopedist James Andrews performed the first flexor tendon surgery in February of 2009, and Sheets said -- if he goes through with it again -- Andrews or Rangers orthopedist Keith Meister will orchestrate the procedure, which would again require around a year's worth of recovery time.

"We'll see," Sheets said. "I'm 32 and obviously getting toward the back end of my career. I felt OK at times this year, and it was like I was making strides. But if I were to come back, I'd have to feel a lot better than I did. With the first one, I missed a year, from February to January. I would probably be looking at the back end of next year."

Without it, though, he realizes he'd be facing retirement.

"If I don't get surgery, my career's over," Sheets said. "I think that would be the end. I don't think I have that option."

The A's took a gamble on Sheets with a one-year contract worth \$10 million plus incentives, the latter part of the agreement no longer relevant given his shortened season. It represented the largest one-year deal the A's have ever awarded a free agent they signed from outside their organization, and Sheets hoped to uphold the back end of his deal, but he admitted Thursday his elbow "never really felt great" during his 20 starts.

"I guess it was wishful thinking," he said, "but I always thought it would come around. There were times during the year where I thought my stuff was turning the corner, so I thought my elbow would follow suit. And that step just never happened."

Sheets was also slightly fooled by his ability to go about everyday activities with a sense of normalcy -- something he couldn't do the last time around.

"Two years ago when I had this happen, I couldn't do anything," he said. "I couldn't open a door, I couldn't brush my teeth, I couldn't brush my hair. I just couldn't do much. It was always hurting. This time, nothing hurt. It was weird, because when I walked into the trainer's office after the Red Sox game [July 19], it wasn't so much that my elbow hurt but that my arm was swollen. When it was looked at initially, I was told, 'Ben, that's not good.'

"I had been contemplating all those smaller things it could be. I didn't really feel I had re-tore the flexor. My arm just didn't hold up at the end of the day. The procedure was done correctly and the rehab, we took our time. It just wouldn't hold up on me."

The rehab part of it, which Sheets deemed "more boring than anything," isn't scaring away the veteran pitcher. For now, though, he's going to take time to enjoy the company of his green and gold teammates.

"Y'all will see me back," he said. "I'll be back most of the year with them. I think we were good for each other. They were good for me, and I was good for them. It's such a great clubhouse. Those guys go about their business every day, and there are a lot of good quality people there, a lot of good quality players. That's why I want to be back to be a part of it."

Anderson, Hudson have things to prove

By Didier Morais / MLB.com

Nearly two months since his last start, Brett Anderson is making his heralded return to the Athletics' rotation.

The southpaw pitcher, who endured a long stint on the DL due to elbow tendinitis, tossed a 40-pitch side session Wednesday and will be making his seventh start of the season against the surging White Sox.

Although it'll be Anderson's first time squaring off against Chicago this season, Oakland is familiar with the White Sox. Both clubs faced off last weekend, with the Athletics claiming two out of three games at the Coliseum.

"We just saw them and played a real tough series that we ended up winning," manager Bob Geren said. "We feel good with Brett back on the mound. We're going to see a couple of good pitchers we didn't see last time, so it should be another tight series."

Friday's starter, Dan Hudson, isn't one of those new pitchers. The White Sox hurler pitched against Oakland last Sunday, but endured some struggles in the outing, yielding five runs in five innings to skyrocket his ERA to 6.32.

And it was a performance that left Chicago skipper Ozzie Guillen disappointed.

"The secondary pitches have got to be better," Guillen said afterward. "Sliders and changeups -- they have to be more consistent. You're not going to survive in the big leagues with just one pitch. You got to throw a secondary pitch for a strike and be more consistent."

White Sox: All quiet on the trade front

General manager Ken Williams, Guillen said, has not stepped foot in the White Sox clubhouse recently. With the Trade Deadline looming, it shouldn't come as a surprise.

However, the Chicago manager doesn't expect any more additions to his club's roster.

"I expect it to stay the same way. I believe so," Guillen said. "I think if Carlos [Quentin] swings the bat the way he did a couple weeks ago, we're set. Everybody has to pull it together. We have to go and continue to do what we're doing and see what happens. I don't have any gut feeling."

Athletics: Sheets needs more surgery

Ben Sheets learned Wednesday that he will miss the remainder of the season due to a torn flexor tendon on his surgically repaired right elbow. The pitcher, who has been plagued by injuries throughout his career, said the news came as a surprise.

"I thought maybe it might be just a small strain in the forearm or something," Sheets said. "I really didn't feel it on any pitch or anything, so I don't know if it was just over time, or what happened with it. I didn't have the same type of pain that I had two years ago."

As a result of the injury, Sheets is slated to go under the knife for yet another surgery. And he's aware that without it, his career may come to screeching halt.

"If I don't get surgery, my career is over," Sheets said. "I think that would be the end. I don't think I have that option."

Worth noting

Oakland's Landon Powell received his first start at catcher since July 18, while Kurt Suzuki was placed in the designated hitter's spot Thursday against the Rangers. In the process, Daric Barton received a day off. ... The White Sox have won 11 straight at home and 18 of 19. The only loss in this stretch was June 27 against the Cubs.

Young, Teagarden's rare HR send Rangers by A's, 7-4

By JAIME ARON, ASSOCIATED PRESS

ARLINGTON, Texas — Michael Young scored his first three times up and light-hitting Taylor Teagarden hit a two-run home run, sending the Texas Rangers to a 7-4 victory over the A's on Thursday night.

The Rangers won the series against the A's and closed out a homestand against division rivals by going 5-2. They added 3 1/2 games to their lead in the AL West and head back on the road 8 1/2 games clear of the A's.

Texas opened the day by putting All-Star second baseman Ian Kinsler on the disabled list, calling up rookie Mitch Moreland to perhaps become their left-handed hitting first baseman and then traded two pitching prospects to Florida for Jorge Cantu, who is likely to be their right-handed hitting first baseman.

Josh Hamilton moved from his usual spot behind Vladimir Guerrero into Kinsler's No. 3 spot in the lineup, and Nelson Cruz moved up to No. 5. The first two times through the lineup, the Nos. 2 through 5 hitters were 6 for 7 with a walk; the lone out was an RBI groundout by Guerrero.

The Rangers led 4-1 after squandering a bases-loaded, one-out chance to break things open against A's starter Vin Mazzaro (6-3) in the fifth. Texas starter C.J. Wilson (10-5) got into trouble in the sixth and Oakland was back within 4-3 when the bottom of the Rangers' lineup came through.

David Murphy led off with a 431-foot homer. Joaquin Arias beat out a grounder to short for a single, then scored on Teagarden's homer.

Teagarden started the season in the majors but was sent down because of his poor hitting. He came up Saturday after Matt Treanor was hurt and was 1 for 29 the entire season when he put the ball into the seats in right-center field.

Moreland singled in his first big league at-bat and went 2 for 4, with a drive to the warning track in center among his outs. That performance could mean a demotion Friday for Chris Davis (.188 in 31 games) to make room for Cantu.

Cruz had an RBI single in the first, extending his career-best hitting streak to 17 games.

Kevin Kouzmanoff doubled twice and Matt Carson and Rajai Davis each had two hits. Davis was caught in a rundown to end the game.

Wilson won his third straight start, giving up three runs and seven hits over 5 2-3 innings. He struck out five, walked two and hit a batter.

Mazzaro had one of his worst starts of the year, giving up seven runs and 12 hits over 5 1-3 innings. He struck out three and walked one.

NOTES: The Rangers will alter their rotation for the weekend road series against the Angels, moving RHP Tommy Hunter up a day to Friday. RHP Scott Feldman, who had been scheduled for Friday, has been tentatively moved to Saturday. The Rangers also could shift Feldman to the bullpen and activate RHP Rich Harden from the 15-day DL for Saturday's start. Harden, who's been out since June 12 with a strained left gluteal muscle, pitched six shutout innings in a minor league rehab start on Monday. ... The A's will be without their closer, RHP Andrew Bailey, for a while longer. Bailey was unavailable for the series against Texas with back spasms, and manager Bob Geren said Bailey "felt it a little bit" during a throwing session Thursday.

EXCLUSIVE Q&A WITH SAN JOSE MAYOR CHUCK REED: CONFIDENT THE OAKLAND A'S WILL MOVE TO SAN JOSE

by James Spencer, publicceo.com, 7/29/2010

San Jose Mayor **Chuck Reed** is steering the Oakland A's to his city.

Frustrated after waiting 16 months for MLB Commissioner Bud Selig's committee to explore potential destinations for the Oakland ballclub, Reed decided to make a dramatic move. He issued a proposal to put the privately financed ballpark measure on the November ballot, with or without approval from MLB.

Reed's hopes were that it might nudge MLB if they saw that a ballpark was already approved, and Reed thought it would save the city money putting the issue to voters in November. The nudge worked - at least providing movement from MLB.

Selig expressed disappointment in Reed's premature proposal since the league has yet to decide whether or not the team can move. Since then, however, MLB officials said they would help cover any costs of a special election, if needed.

On Thursday, Reed provided PublicCEO with an exclusive interview:

In your heart, do you believe the A's will eventually be in San Jose?

Yes.

Chuck Reed

Okay, that's a good, quick answer.

The economics of the deal are pretty powerful and I think when Major League Baseball owners look at what is in it for them, they will see it is of great value to Major League Baseball.

Right now, the A's in Oakland are a net drag on Major League Baseball in revenue sharing in excess of \$30 million a year. If they move to San Jose, they will be a net positive. So that's a million dollars to every club basically in revenue sharing differential.

We also have the highest household median income of any big city in the country. We have a great corporate base here in Silicon Valley, a market that Major League Baseball certainly wants to be engaged in. The economics of the analysis are pretty strong.

Is Major League Baseball's firmness that San Jose should delay voting on a ballpark a good or bad sign?

I read it as a good sign because they offered to help pay for a special election in the spring. That is some movement on their part. I take it as a good sign.

Who in Major League Baseball were the recent conversations with and what's the summary of how that conversation went?

It was with the President of Major League Baseball, Bob DuPuy. He said that they were very appreciative of the work we have done in San Jose. They appreciate our enthusiasm. But that the commissioner had a sequence and a process that he wanted to follow and the commissioner thought that having the election in November would be disruptive to the work that he is trying to do.

They understand there is a cost factor in having a special election and that is why they offered to help pay for a special election in the spring. So it was a cordial conversation. I decided that the best course would be to honor the commissioner's request and let him do the work in the order in which he wants to do it.

A's owner Lew Wolff

What is the current dialogue between you and A's owner Lew Wolff regarding making this happen?

Lew and I talk on a regular basis. His side of the equation is to work with Major League Baseball and my side of the equation is to work here on putting San Jose in the best position possible so when the commissioner is finished with his process we're able to move ahead.

Are you an Oakland A's fan or a Giants fan?

I have been a fan of both of those teams but I stopped being much of a baseball fan in the last strike. So for me, I'm not a fanatical baseball fan.

This is an economical development opportunity for the city of San Jose. We're talking about nearly a \$500 million private sector investment. *Privately* financed, *privately* built, *privately* operated investment of \$500 million will generate thousands of jobs and millions of dollars of tax revenues for local government. We would love to have additional tax revenues and additional jobs.

How much of an issue is it to MLB regarding the San Francisco Giants territorial rights?

The Giants territorial rights were created in the early '90s when the Giants wanted to move to San Jose. The A's were happy to see them go - because right now they're five or 10 miles apart.

The territorial rights belong to Major League Baseball and they can be changed by the owners. It takes a ¾ vote of the owners to do that but nevertheless I think it's in Major League Baseball's interest to do that based on the economics of the deal. Obviously, it is a big issue and the commissioner is very seriously considering it, trying to work it out.

At this point, what is the biggest question mark for a possible move?

I think the only big question mark is the territorial issue. Waiting for Major League Baseball to decide whether or not to change the territory.

Are you confident that voters will embrace this and want a ballpark?

Yes. As long as it's privately financed, privately constructed and privately operated, the voters are very enthusiastic about the possibility of having a Major League team in San Jose.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Wimberly steals home in Sacramento defeat

By Kevin Poveda / Sacramento River Cats

The Sacramento River Cats lost their second game in a row at Raley Field, falling to the Colorado Spring Sky Sox 5-2 on Thursday night.

The River Cats controlled the game early with two runs in the first inning. Sacramento's first run came on a double steal by Eric Sogard and Corey Wimberly. Sogard took off for second on an Alan Johnson pick-off move, and Wimberly dashed for home for a 1-0 lead when Johnson threw to second base in an attempt to throw out Sogard.

By stealing home, Wimberly recorded his 42nd steal of the season, putting him one shy of tying the team record of 43 set last season by Eric Patterson.

After Chris Carter's single advanced Sogard to third, outfielder Michael Taylor grounded into a double play that allowed Sogard to score for a 2-0 lead.

Sacramento had a great opportunity to put more runs on the board in the second when they loaded the bases with singles by Wimberly and Anthony Recker and a Sogard walk. However, Carter was unable to bring any of the River Cats home after striking out.

The River Cats held things down over the following four innings behind strong pitching from the right-handed starter Kyle Middleton. Middleton, who entered Thursday's game ranking seventh overall in the PCL with a 3.30 ERA, struggled in the sixth as Colorado Springs put up five runs.

Sky Sox left fielder Cole Garner started things off when he singled on a line drive to left field. Middleton then walked the next batter before giving up a double to Travis Metcalf that scored Garner. Middleton's next pitch, to first baseman Mike Paulk, was a home run to right field. Middleton faced one more batter before calling it a night, walking Michael McKenry.

The River Cats collected as many hits as Colorado (eight), however they were unable get those hits when they needed them most.

Sacramento is now 1-2 since returning from its 12-game road trip that saw them go 7-5. With Thursday's loss and a 6-4 win by Fresno over Tacoma, the River Cats now trail Fresno by 1.0 game for first place in the PCL South Division. Sacramento continues its series with Colorado on Friday night at Raley Field at 7:05 p.m.

RockHounds Complete Sweep of Frisco

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

In a one-week home stand at Citibank Ballpark, the RockHounds won 6-of-7 games ... the last three comprising a sweep of the Frisco RoughRiders ... moved over .500 at home (no easy task in the Texas League this season) and swept the Frisco RoughRiders.

Let's see ... what are we forgetting? Oh yes ... the 'Hounds are now in first place in the Texas League South.

Matt Wright was outstanding Thursday night, tossing 7.0 shutout innings, allowing just five hits, with no walks and two strikeouts. In the last two wins, 'Hounds pitching struck out 11 and did not walk a batter. Wright and Neil Wagner hcombined on the 'Hounds third shutout of the season, this one capping a 3-game sweep of Frisco, and pushing the 'Hounds past the RoughRiders into first place.

Alex Valdez was the instigator on offense, with a pair of lead-off doubles. The first of those came in the fourth inning, and would lead to the game's first run. Alex then doubled leading off the sixth, and the 'Hounds would score five times, breaking open a very close game at the expense of 10-game winner Tanner Roark.

Shane Peterson had two hits, including an RBI double, extending his hit streak to 16 games.

The 'Hounds are now 28-25 at home, which may not sound like much, but only four of the eight Texas League teams have winbning records at home this season. Frisco is one of them, and the RoughRiders are just 26-24 at home. Success at Citibank Ballpark could be a huge key to the second half, with a 10-game home stand opening next Friday.

The RockHounds greatly enhanced their playoff chances during the home stand. Not only are they now in a tight battle for the second half title, but (should Frisco win the second half) have also built their lead in the wild card to seven games over San Antonio.

Haviland, Ports one-hit Storm in 2-1 Win

Grant Green extends hitting streak to 13 games

STOCKTON, Calif. – Shawn Haviland turned in a great performance on Thursday night, one-hitting the Lake Elsinore Storm (63-41), to help lead the Stockton Ports (49-55) to a 2-1 win. The lone hit he allowed was a solo home run by Cody Decker.

The win was Haviland's seventh this season, which also snapped his three-game losing streak. Haviland struck out eight in 7.0 innings. It was the fourth time this season he's tossed a season-high seven innings. Paul Smyth bounced back well from his blown save and loss on Tuesday, as he picked up his 17th save by tossing 2.0 shutout innings with four strikeouts.

Grant Green finished the game 1x4 with an RBI single to extend his hitting streak to 13 games. He's batting .375 (21x56) with five doubles, two home runs and 11 RBI in that span. He's just the second Ports batter to hit safely in 12 or more consecutive games. Todd Johnson set the team hitting streak with 15 games in the spring.

After retiring the side in order in the first inning, Haviland gave up a solo shot to Decker on a 1-1 pitch to start the second inning. It was Decker's 21st home run of the year.

The Ports looked to respond in the second inning, but were unable to capitalize on their scoring opportunities. Third baseman Stephen Parker doubled to right field to start the frame. He was followed on base by first baseman Mike Spina, who singled. But then Ports catcher Yusuf Carter grounded into a double play to strand Parker at third. Right fielder Jeremy Barfield grounded out to end the Ports threat.

Lake Elsinore held on to their slim 1-0 lead until the sixth inning, when the Ports offense started rolling. Center fielder Jermaine Mitchell doubled to right field to jump start the Ports. Second baseman Tyler Ladendorf then hit a sacrifice bunt, and Mitchell reached third safely on the play. With runners on the corners and no out, Green knocked an RBI single to tie the game. Parker then hit into a fielder's choice that put Green out at second. There were runners on the corners still with just one out for Spina. Spina singled to right-center field, to bring home Ladendorf and put the Ports ahead, 2-1.

Following the game-winning single from Spina, the Storm called on Eric Gonzalez to pitch. He retired the next five batters to hold the Ports in check. The Ports bullpen likewise worked to limit the Storm the rest of the game.

Scott Deal faced the first two batters of the eighth inning, hitting catcher Adam Zornes and walking center fielder Bo Davis. The Ports then called on Smyth to pitch. With two on and no out, second baseman Cole Figueroa hit a sacrifice bunt to move the runners along. Smyth then intentionally walked third baseman Vince Belnome to load the bases, and put a force at any base. Smyth then got the next two batters, Cody and Jaff Decker, to strike out swinging, ending the Storm threat.

In the ninth inning, Smyth got one out before walking Allan Dykstra. He then got the next two batters to strike out to end the game and secure the Ports victory.

Cougars Even Series In The Quad Cities **Kane County Collects 7-4 Victory Over The River Bandits**

Davenport, Iowa. – It was a battle on the banks of the Mississippi River Thursday night between the Kane County Cougars and the Quad Cities River Bandits. Kane County was able to secure the 7-4 victory, and tie the series at one a piece. In doing so, both teams will battle for the series victory Friday night. The Cougars are looking to avoid dropping three straight sets tomorrow by winning the set, before returning home for a seven game homestand.

Cougars Starter Dan Straily (8-7) picked up the victory in five innings of work, allowing 2 runs, while striking out seven. Ryan Doolittle (0-0), and Bo Shultz (4-1) worked in relief for the Cougars, allowing 2 runs over 2 1/3 innings. The River Bandits scored in 4 innings, but with only 1 run at a time. Jose Guzman came on to close the game in the bottom of the ninth, and recorded his 14th save of the season.

The Cougars offense came to life, providing nine hits, and drawing six walks. Connor Crumbliss was 2-3, with two doubles, two walks, 3 runs scored, and an RBI. Kane County scored in five different frames, including the eighth inning on a two run home run from Rashun Dixon, his 7th of the season. Anthony Aliotti also had plenty of contributions at the plate, going 2-5 with a pair of RBI.